

42. Report of the Stationing Committee

Basic Information

Title	Report of the Stationing Committee
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Status of Paper	Final Report
Resolution/s	42/1 The Conference receives the Report. 42/2 The Conference approves the creation of 'Ministry Deployment Figures' to replace circuit establishment figures with effect from September 2011 ...

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	The report of the work of the Stationing Committee for 2009/10.
Main Points	Review of the Stationing Matching Process Initial Stationing Changes to the Stationing Matching Process for 2010–11 Establishment Figures Appointments within the control of the Methodist Church Changes to the Connexional Good Practice document Review of Committees The Conference report 'Ministerial and Diaconal Oversight and Authorisations' Stationing issues for Circuits which are reconfiguring Bristol District resolutions to the Conference of 2009
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	Stationing Review Group Report Conference 2008

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1 Review of the Stationing Matching Process for 2009–10

1.1 The matching process for presbyters due to take up appointments in September 2010 began with 121 presbyters and 155 circuit appointments available for matching, a shortfall of 34 presbyters (41 in 2008–09 and 34 in 2007–08). It was clear that not all appointments would be filled and once again, the task of deciding which circuit appointments were most critical fell to District Chairs, Lay Stationing Representatives, District Policy Committees and Regional Stationing Groups.

1.2 The Stationing Matching Group for presbyters welcomed as its new Chair the Revd David Emison (Superintendent Minister of the Ryedale Circuit in the York and Hull District and former Chair of the Cumbria District).

In phase 1 of the matching process (superintendency appointments) 35 superintendencies were matched, together with 1 presbyteral appointment in Guernsey, which was included in phase 1 following the recommendation of the Stationing Review Group. 1 superintendency appointment could not be matched. Of the 35 matches suggested, 27 were agreed, 3 were declined by the circuit, 3 by the minister and 2 were mutually declined. The 'success' rate was 77% (77% for 2008–09 and 74% for 2007–08).

1.3 In phase 2 of the process, 5 out of the 8 outstanding superintendency appointments were matched (13 outstanding in 2008–09 and 17 in 2007–08). All 5 matches were agreed, a 'success' rate of 100% (69% for 2008–09 and 83% for 2007–08). Of the 81 presbyteral matches proposed, 71 were agreed, a 'success' rate of 88% (77% for 2008–09 and 79% for 2007–08). Six matches were declined by the circuit, three by the minister, one was mutually declined.

1.4 Phase 3 of the matching process in early January proved to be complex and challenging. 19 matches were made, of which 15 were agreed, a 'success' rate of 79% (78% in 2008–09 and 74% in 2007–08). Three matches were declined by the circuit and one by the minister.

1.5 The Methodist Diaconal Order stationed 25 deacons for 2010–11 in what was one of the most complex stationing rounds in many years which involved 5 stationing presbyteral/diaconal couples and 7 probationer deacons. Many diverse and sensitive issues arose during the stationing process including two deacons rejecting their appointments and a further deacon requesting to be released from an appointment after the match had been agreed. As a result, the Warden requested that the Stationing Committee convene a small group to look at a range of issues including married ministerial couples, changes in the

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patterns of itinerancy, length of diaconal appointments, the nature of 'without appointment' status and direct stationing. A group was convened which sent a short report to the Stationing Committee recommending amongst other things that the Convocation of the Methodist Diaconal Order (MDO) be invited to reaffirm the traditional principles governing diaconal stationing of direct stationing and a commitment to itinerancy. The group felt that a wider review of the diaconal stationing process was not necessary.

The Stationing Committee also gave permission for a second member of the Diaconal Stationing Sub-committee to be invited to join the Stationing Matching Group as a support person to the Warden.

- 1.6 The Stationing Action Group (convened by the Revd Leo Osborn, Chair of the Newcastle upon Tyne District) takes over the work of the Matching Group for presbyters and the Warden and Stationing Sub-committee of the Methodist Diaconal Order following the end of January each year. At the beginning of February, 37 circuit appointments for presbyters remained unfilled, 5 of which had become available since phase 3 of the matching process. Eight presbyters were available to be matched.
- 1.7 The task of the Stationing Action Group is a constantly changing one, as new profiles are received for

circuit appointments and additional deacons and presbyters become available. On 31 March it is possible for circuit appointments to be withdrawn following the submission of a reasoned statement approved by the Stationing Committee and provided that a sufficient number of appointments with a generous geographical spread remains available.

- 1.8 At the time of writing this report in mid April 2010, the Stationing Action Group has matched presbyters to 14 appointments, 8 of which have been confirmed as agreed. Confirmation is awaited from the remainder. The Group has also stationed two presbyters to appointments outside the matching process.
- 1.9 The diaconal and presbyteral stationing processes continue to be very dynamic and complex and the Stationing Action Group deals with the needs of a significant number of ministers and circuits where matches are required at a late stage in the Methodist year. The success of matches made by the Stationing Action Group owes a great deal to the work of the Convenor and the willingness of deacons and presbyters, circuits and districts to be flexible, imaginative and responsive to the great variety of ways in which God's people are served by both ordained and lay ministry.
- 1.10 The Committee would again like to draw the attention of the Conference

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and Connexion to the increasing number of married ministerial partnerships (deacons married to deacons, deacons married to presbyters, presbyters married to presbyters and deacons and presbyters married to diaconal and presbyteral probationers). The Committee welcomes this developing gift to the Connexion and again emphasises its belief that the appropriate matching processes are in place.

Six presbyteral couples were involved in the matching process, where both partners were seeking an appointment. In three cases presbyters were seeking a match, whilst the presbyteral partner was not available for stationing. Three presbyters were married to deacons who also needed to be stationed. One presbyter was married to a minister from another denomination who was also seeking an appointment. One presbyter was married to a presbyteral probationer needing to be stationed. One presbyter was married to a deacon who was not to be stationed. One presbyteral probationer was married to a diaconal probationer, both of whom were to be stationed.

The diaconal and presbyteral stationing processes together needed to ensure that stationing decisions enabled a total of 32 married ministers to work in appointments which were appropriate and for the partners to live together.

1.11 The Stationing Committee and the *Connexional Good Practice* document have continued to encourage circuits to recognise the value of other forms of ministry in circumstances where an ordained presbyter or presbyteral probationer might well have been sought in the past. The increased recognition of the value of a diaconal appointment has continued with a further increase in the number of requests to station a deacon for September 2010, a trend which has been matched by an increase in the number of diaconal candidates.

1.12 A number of circuits have once again recognised the value of an interval between the departure of a minister and the submission of a new circuit profile. Such an interval can offer the time and space needed for new models of ministry to be explored.

1.13 Once again this year there has been a significant impact on the matching process of family and geographical restraints for presbyters and deacons, including the need for proximity to vulnerable family members, schools, hospitals and the employment of household members. Eleven presbyters expressed a willingness to be stationed without any geographical limitation.

1.14 The Committee would again like to pay tribute to the work of preparation carried out by

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Circuit Stewards, Lay Stationing Representatives, District Chairs, and the Warden and Stationing Sub-committee of the Methodist Diaconal Order.

The matching of deacons and presbyters with appropriate appointments owes much to the openness and honesty of profiles and to very real knowledge which Chairs, Lay Reps and the Warden have of the qualities and skills of the ministers concerned and of the needs of household members. The preparation of profiles by ministers and circuits is a demanding and time-consuming exercise, but accurate profiles are essential if the matching process is to work effectively.

- 1.15 In phases 1 and 2 of the matching process for presbyters, Lay Stationing Representatives are invited to observe the matching process and to pass on their observations to the Committee. This year seven Lay Reps attended the two phases and their reports again spoke of the atmosphere of openness, honesty and graciousness in which the meetings took place and the prayerfulness with which Chairs approached their task.

One paragraph from a report confirms this judgement once again: "My overwhelming thought is one of the spiritual and careful way in which the needs of both

presbyters and circuits are considered – I have no hesitation in commending the process to both presbyters and circuit stewards, and saying that their welfare and future is in good hands."

- 1.16 Everyone involved in the stationing process acknowledges the pain which it can sometimes cause for ministers, household members and for circuits, especially when a proposed match cannot be agreed. The Matching Group and the Committee rejoice with all those involved in successful matches and the Committee wishes to assure the Conference, once again, that the matching process and the direct stationing processes for deacons, probationers and ministers from other Conferences and Churches coming to serve the British Conference are carried out with great care, prayerfully and always taking into account the principles involved in *Regrouping for Mission: Mapping a Way Forward* and the *Priorities for the Methodist Church*. All those involved seek God's guidance in the sometimes complex task of balancing the needs of the Church with those of its ministers and their families.

2 Initial Stationing

- 2.1 The Initial Stationing Sub-committee meets each year in early January to station presbyteral probationers and ministers serving the Methodist Church in Great Britain, from other

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Conferences, from other Churches overseas and from other Churches in the United Kingdom. For both groups the process is one of direct stationing.

Circuits and districts are represented by a Chair from each Regional Stationing Group. Student ministers are represented by Principals and Tutors from the Training Institutions. Ministers from other Conferences and Churches are represented by a member of the Connexional Team. The group is chaired by the Chair of the Stationing Committee.

- 2.2 Requests from circuits for a probationer or minister from another Conference or Church regularly exceed the number of ministers available. A small group of Chairs, together with the Warden of the MDO, the Chair of the Tutors' Group, the Chair of the Stationing Committee and a member of the Connexional Team carries out the process of identifying circuit profiles which match the criteria for the stationing of these ministers. Profiles must indicate the willingness and ability of the circuit to provide effective induction, mentoring and support, a somewhat lighter load of circuit work, time for study and membership of the District Probationers' Group or in the case of ministers from another Conference or Church, the District Under 5 Years in Ministry Group.

The Committee is grateful to the Revd Dr Howard Mellor, other

members of the Connexional Team and all those involved in the newly developed selection processes for ministers offering to serve the Methodist Church in Great Britain and commends this developing work to the Conference.

- 2.3 A total of 33 (29 for 2009) presbyteral students were available for stationing, together with 11 ministers accepted to serve the Methodist Church in Great Britain, a number of them having served in high office in Methodist Connexions overseas. 124 applications had been received from ministers wishing to transfer to the Methodist Church in Great Britain. Fifty interviews had been held, as a result of which seventeen presbyters and one deacon were accepted for stationing in 2010 or 2011. A further interview process for 2011 will begin in September 2010.

Forty appointments in total were accepted as suitable for stationing a probationer or minister accepted to serve the British Conference and a further eleven appointments were accepted at a later date when it was anticipated that a larger number of transferring ministers than originally thought might be accepted. In the event not all of these additional appointments were required and they became available for matching in phase 3 of the matching process and through the work of the Stationing Action Group. The Committee is grateful to these circuits for their

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generous offer to accept a minister through the direct stationing process and for their graciousness when this did not happen.

Five presbyteral probationers had very limited deployability, having offered as candidates from circuits with the expectation that they would serve in ministry in those circuits (on the same principle as the former Ministers in Local Appointment – MLA). The Committee wishes to encourage those people who feel called by God to ordained ministry, but are unable to undertake an appointment that is itinerant or full time or both to consider offering as candidates for this form of ministry.

3 Changes to the Stationing Matching Process for 2011

- 3.1 The Committee has accepted a proposal to make a significant change in the matching arrangements for presbyters for September 2011. There will continue to be three matching group meetings (to be known as Stationing Matching Group 1, 2 and 3) in November and December of 2010 and in January 2011. However, both superintendency and other presbyteral appointments will be considered at each of the meetings. There will not be a separate phase for superintendencies.
- 3.2 During Stationing Matching Group 1, District Chairs (after consultation with their Lay Stationing Reps, District

Policy Groups and Regional Stationing Groups) will decide the order in which they will call their appointments for matching. It may be that from time to time a non-superintendency vacancy is considered to be a critical appointment and it will be possible for any Chair to call such an appointment ahead of a superintendency if she/he considers this to be appropriate.

In discussion with Chairs and Lay Reps., presbyters will be able to identify both superintendency and other appointments as potential matches if they so wish.

Stationing Matching Group 1 will last for four days (rather than three) and will be a week later than has been the case for the superintendency phase in the past. This will allow the necessary time which will be needed for additional discussions with ministers and circuit stewards. Stationing Matching Group 2 in December will last for 24 hours rather than 3 full days. The arrangements for Stationing Matching Group 3 in January will be unaltered.

The processes of *Regrouping for Mission* have led to very significant changes in the structure and size of circuits in different parts of the Connexion and to very different ways in which superintendency is interpreted. Some circuits now have a very different model of superintendency from that which has been conventional within the Methodist Church. In some circuits,

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the superintendent exercises a pastoral ministry for a large number of presbyters and deacons and may or may not have pastoral charge of a church or churches. Elsewhere the long established model of circuit and superintendency continues to serve the present age. Some circuits have appointed co-superintendents, following a change to Standing Orders made by the Conference of 2008. In many circuits lay ministry is an important factor and the superintendent may exercise a supervisory and mentoring role for a number of lay people.

Such changes have altered the dynamic of ministry in many circuits and the Committee hopes that the changes to the matching process noted here will enable it to develop effectively to serve both ministers and circuits and the Church as a whole in these exciting and challenging times.

The necessary protocol and procedural changes were agreed at the meeting of the Stationing Committee in April 2010. Amendments to the *Code of Practice for the Stationing of Presbyters* in Book VI Part 2 Section 1A of the Constitutional Practice and Discipline of the Methodist Church will be placed before the Conference on the Order Paper.

4 Establishment Figures

4.1 In line with the recommendation of the Stationing Review Group, the Committee proposes that with effect

from the start of the connexional year in September 2011, establishment figures counted at circuit level be discontinued and that instead 'Ministry Deployment Figures', being the full-time equivalent number of ordained ministers (presbyters and deacons) and ministerial probationers (presbyteral and diaconal), be counted at district level. The figure on which the Ministry Deployment Figure will be based will be the 'District Allocation Figure' submitted to the Finance Office each year.

4.2 The Committee proposes that the Ministry Deployment Figure (MDF) for each district should not be exceeded without the consent of the Stationing Committee. It further proposes that the MDF for each district be shown in the Minutes of the Annual Conference and Directory against the district title in the Stations of Ministers and Deacons (section 7) and that the current practice of showing the figure for each circuit be discontinued.

4.3 The proposed changes to these arrangements will enable District Policy Committees (or their equivalent), following consultation with the circuits or other stations in the district, to allocate annually the number of ordained presbyters and deacons and ministerial probationers to be available to each circuit or other group, in accordance with mission priorities. The Committee proposes that the decision of the DPC be confirmed by the District Synod in April or September each year.

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4.4 The Committee has asked that a proposal to amend Standing Orders be brought to the Conference of 2010 to enable the changes to be implemented.

5 Appointments within the control of the Methodist Church

5.1 The Committee considered a paper from the Connexional Team designed to give clarity about which appointments for presbyters and deacons are and are not within the control of the Methodist Church.

5.2 The Stationing Advisory Committee, which is appointed by the Methodist Council and reports to the Stationing Committee, is charged with offering advice to ministers considering the possibility of an appointment outside circuit ministry and advising the Stationing Committee and the Conference on situations where permission should be granted or withheld.

5.3 The Stationing Committee asked that further work be undertaken to provide clear guidance for all involved in stationing matters on issues such as:

- decision-making processes where there is the potential for conflict between a minister's existing circuit appointment and a proposed appointment not within the control of the Church;
- curtailments where a minister has been offered an appointment not within the control of the Church;
- clarity about the distinction between appointments within

the control of the Church and authorisations to serve in appointments not within the control of the Church;

- clarity concerning those bodies (e.g. Methodist Residential Schools) which appoint to appointments within the control of the Church.

6 Changes to the *Connexional Good Practice* document

6.1 The *Connexional Good Practice* document is issued in May each year, in time for district briefings of ministers and their spouses, superintendents and circuit stewards on the arrangements for stationing for the forthcoming year.

6.2 Changes for the 2011 edition have included:

- (i) paragraphs giving advice on the processes needed to implement the decisions of the Conference of 2009 concerning the extension of ministerial appointments. The wording of the Standing Orders relating to extensions is reproduced;
- (ii) paragraphs giving details of the proposed changes to the Stationing Matching process for presbyters;
- (iii) additional advice on how, following the matching process, visits to circuits might be arranged in order for the best outcome for ministers and circuits to be achieved;

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- (iv) inclusion of a sample 'Letter of Understanding' to be agreed by the minister and the circuit;
- (v) an index designed to improve ease of access to the document;
- (vi) a summary of the stationing process and timetable.

6.3 The timetable for 2011 stationing is:

May to July 2010

District briefing meetings for presbyters, deacons and their household members, together with superintendent ministers and circuit stewards.

June to August 2010

Circuit consultations concerning reinventions and recommendations from Invitation Committees to September Circuit Meetings.

On or before 20 September

Consideration of reinventions and votes in Circuit Meetings.

By 6 September

Draft Diaconal profiles to be with the Warden of the Diaconal Order.

By 23 September

Probationer application forms to be with the District Chair.

By 27 September

Diaconal and circuit profiles to be with the Warden of the Diaconal Order.

By 27 September

Probationer application forms to be with the Connexional Team.

By 1 October

Presbyteral and circuit profiles to be with the District Chair.

By 6 October

Presbyteral and circuit profiles to be with the Connexional Team.

30 September

Initial stationing appointment designated.

19 October

Diaconal Stationing Sub-committee

Late October

Profile books and CD-ROMs sent out.

8–11 November

Stationing Matching Group 1.

11 November

Matches notified to presbyters and circuits by District Chairs.

11 November

Deacons and circuits informed of diaconal stations.

12–21 November

Visits to circuits arranged and agreed and declined matches notified to District Chairs and to Stationing Administration. Letter of Understanding issued shortly afterwards.

6–7 December

Stationing Matching Group 2.

From 8 December

Matches reported and visits arranged. Agreed and declined matches notified.

4 January 2011

Initial Stationing Sub-committee.

11 January 2011

Stationing Matching Group 3

From 12 January

Matches reported and visits arranged. Agreed and declined matches notified.

February to June 2011

Stationing Action Group continues the matching process.

April 2011

Stationing Committee recommends the stations to the Conference.

June 2011

The Conference approves the stations.

7 Review of Committees and proposal to form a Ministries Committee

- 7.1 The Committee has welcomed the proposal, elaborated elsewhere

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in the Conference Agenda, that a 'Ministries Committee' be established and that the structure of committees undertaking oversight and executive functions (eg in relation to stationing matching arrangements, initial stationing arrangements, preparation of the *Connexional Good Practice* document etc.) be reconfigured in a complementary manner.

8 The Conference Report "Ministerial and Diaconal Oversight and Authorisations"

8.1 The Stationing Committee has asked that two groups of ministers be added into the report to the Conference, namely Ministers to be 'without appointment' and Ministers given 'permission to study'. The Committee also suggested that some simplification of the report might be welcome.

9 Stationing issues in circuits which are reconfiguring

9.1 The Committee agreed that the advice given in 2008 and 2009 in response to the Memorial M51 to the Conference of 2007 and adopted by the Conference of 2008 remains appropriate. Details of the advice can be obtained from District Chairs or Lay Stationing Representatives. The advice should be consulted before any decisions are taken by circuit meetings in relation to reinvitations for ministers or for the submission of circuit profiles in circuits which are reconfiguring.

10 Bristol District Resolutions to the Conference of 2009

10.1 The Bristol District invited the Conference of 2009 to discuss the issue of advertising vacancies for the appointment of Superintendent ministers to any exceptionally large circuits created in response to the *Regrouping for Mission: Mapping a Way Forward* initiative.

The following resolution was put to the Conference:

- 62/1 The Conference
- a) affirms its commitment to the creative, radical thinking and action asked of those engaged in the *'Mapping a Way Forward'* process;
 - b) notes that this has led in a small number of cases to the creation of significantly larger circuits than have previously existed on our stations;
 - c) recognises the special demands of leadership required in such larger Circuits;
 - d) and therefore seeks to ensure the fullest opportunity is given to find an appropriate person when a change of Superintendent is required through permitting those circuits with itinerant staffing of 12 or more ministers to follow a process of advertising and interviewing for the post;

and

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- e) confirms this permission to have immediate effect in relation to the 2010 stationing process.

When voting on the resolution, the Conference referred the matter back to the Stationing Committee for further consideration.

At its meeting on 13 October 2009, the Committee declined any change in the present arrangements for the advertising of ministerial appointments, whilst affirming its full commitment to the *Regrouping for Mission: Mapping a Way Forward* process.

The Committee believes that the matching process for presbyters provides an excellent basis for the

appointment of appropriately skilled and experienced presbyters to be Superintendents in large circuits. In the event that no match can be agreed and where exceptional circumstances prevail (such as a very large circuit or a project involving specialist skills), the Committee continues to be willing to explore the question of an advertisement following the submission of a reasoned statement from the circuit concerned.

11 Personnel files for ministers

- 11.1 The Stationing Committee was supportive of the report and recommendations, to be brought to the 2010 Conference, regarding personnel files for ministers.

***RESOLUTIONS

42/1. The Conference receives the Report.

42/2. The Conference approves the creation of 'Ministry Deployment Figures' to replace circuit establishment figures with effect from September 2011.